

April 13, 2020

Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

FY21 Operating Budget

Testimony for February 16, 2020

Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager

President Katz and Councilmembers, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the FY21 Operating Budget. Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization in the D.C. region advocating for walkable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities.

As we all know, this discussion comes at a challenging time. We face a public health and economic crisis with no clear end in sight. Thank you for your continued leadership and adaptability.

The coronavirus crisis has shown us how important it is to address the needs of the most vulnerable, which is who we ask you to prioritize when constructing the FY21 Operating Budget. The fiscal constraints may be significant at the moment, but strong social services from county government will make all the difference in whether or not those in economically precarious situations are able to make it out the other side of this crisis.

Our most basic needs include safe, affordable, and decent housing and reliable transit – issues at the core of the Coalition for Smarter Growth’s advocacy. It is critical that everyone can keep a roof over their heads during and after the public health crisis. Therefore, the county must continue and expand rental assistance programs, fund and find housing for the homeless, continue the eviction moratorium, and continuing to work with the state and federal government to direct more resources to affordable housing.

While the big decline in ridership makes it is necessary to reduce transit service at this time, and MCDOT must take essential precautions to protect transit workers and riders, it is also clear that transit must be maintained as a basic public service for our essential, frontline workers. We urge you to utilize federal, state and county funds to save RideOn, and to provide the essential service we need now and the full service we will need during the economic recovery. Funding should include any additional expenses for frequent cleaning to ensure good health and hygiene.

Thank you for your consideration.